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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 001153

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STATE FOR WHA/CEN, EUR/RUS, EUR/CACEN
NSC FOR FISK/GARCIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2018

TAGS: MOPS PREL GG NU RU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUA DEMARCHE ON RECOGNITION OF SOUTH OSSETIA
AND ABKHAZIA

REF: A. STATE 90978
1B. MANAGUA 1124

Classified By: Ambassador Robert Callahan for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) On September 8, Ambassador Callahan delivered ref A demarche to Foreign Minister Samuel Santos after informing him that the visit of Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez had been cancelled. Ambassador emphasized our surprise at the decision, stressing that recognition validated Russia's military invasion and was inconsistent with commitments to Georgia's territorial integrity. Further, Ambassador noted that this decision would cause all aspects of our relationship to be reviewed. While Nicaragua had the authority as a sovereign nation to make such decisions, the United States as a sovereign nation had the obligation to disagree, especially when the territorial integrity of another nation allied to the U.S. and regional security, were at stake.

¶2. (C) Santos offered a convoluted and inconsistent explanation of the decision to recognize the two entities. Noting that he had just returned from Europe, he dismissed the notion that other countries had grounds to be concerned about the decision to recognize and alleged, unconvincingly, that the recent agreement brokered by the French to withdraw Russian troops validated Nicaragua's decision. He declared that the decision to recognize was made by President Ortega and was intended first and foremost to "stop the killings" and aid peace in the region. He also said that recognition was a symbolic demonstration of solidarity following a request made by the two territories for recognition after the "aggression" they suffered from Georgia. Santos also noted that he had warned the U.S. when it recognized Kosovo that it had "opened Pandora's Box" and was now paying the consequences. When Ambassador pointed out the inconsistency of that argument, highlighted by Nicaragua's continued refusal to recognize Kosovo, Santos asserted that Kosovo should have remained part of Yugoslavia and that South Ossetia and Abkhazia were "different" for ethnic, historical and geographic reasons.

¶3. (C) In a September 9 meeting with Vice President Jaime Morales, Ambassador again raised our deep concerns regarding the recognition. Morales attempted to assert that the

recognition was still not "official" until it was publicized in the official register, the Gacetta. When pressed, he admitted that did not mean that there was a chance the recognition could repealed and acknowledged that the political impact remained. Morales echoed Santos' assertion that the decision was made following the request of the leadership of the two territories which had "suffered aggression and asked for help." When pressed as to whether the decision was directed against the U.S., Morales asserted "no" but admitted he did not know all the reasons for the decision behind the timing of the recognition.

¶4. (C) Ambassador spoke via telephone with the UK Ambassador, resident in Costa Rica, the Japanese Ambassador and Charges from Germany, Spain and Norway. All noted that they have not received instructions to date from capitals or the EU, but that there was general concern over the decision to recognize the entities. The German Charge said he expected to receive instructions soon, noting his government's serious concern. The Danish Ambassador confirmed that he has received instructions to raise the issue bilaterally with the GON. Officials of the Canadian Embassy, also resident in Costa Rica, also have spoken with us to obtain more information on the recognition and expects to receive demarche instructions from Ottawa.

CALLAHAN